

Systematizing program “Learning” in MEAL

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Background

Nutrition International (formerly the Micronutrient Initiative) seeks a world where everyone, everywhere is free from malnutrition and able to reach their full potential. For more than 25 years, we have sought to build local capacity to address key nutritional gaps through our network of regional and country offices in close partnership with local stakeholders. In this work, it is important to note:

- Strong programs require rigorous monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL).
- Continual improvements based on program learning are essential for optimizing Nutrition International’s program effectiveness. We need to put good data in the hands of decision-makers that is easy to understand and can be used in a timely manner to improve programs.
- Nutrition International seeks to respond to these data needs by building a systematic approach to “Learning” to aid in turning routine program data into insights, and insights into action in a timely manner. This will combine program content, data analysis, and effective communication to ensure that learning 1) draws on lessons from our program data, 2) is backed by reasoned logic and evidence, 3) is communicated in an accessible format, and 4) is shared in a timely manner.



- This learning is distinguished from evaluation in that it is more frequent, smaller in scale, leading to more immediate change and reflects on monitoring within the entire MEAL process.

Objectives

Overall objective

The overall objective of this project is to ensure that data are used more effectively at Nutrition International. We see this occurring through a systematic way to identify, create, and disseminate program-relevant “learning narratives”, as one component of “learning”.

Specific objectives (SOs)

This ToR is set out to accomplish the following specific objectives:

- 1) Provide an opportunity for Nutrition International staff to ***define what the ‘learning’ function in MEAL means for Nutrition International’s programs***, how we do it and who are the recipients – using real examples of generating, using and disseminating program learning; how we can improve, whether we are reaching our critical audiences in a timely manner, whether internal capacities are adequate. We assume the primary audience will be government and other partners, but may include others.
- 2) Based on feedback from Nutrition International staff, ***identify and prioritize real program topics*** for which user-friendly “program learning narratives” can be used for program course-correction and optimization.
- 3) Assist Nutrition International’s NIS team to ***identify the most appropriate data to gather and target audiences*** for 6-8 prioritized topics for program learning narratives, carrying out data analysis where necessary; consider both available data and data to be collected through Nutrition International and others. These narratives should include ***1-3 more complex topics, 3-4 medium complexity topics and 2-4 simple topics*** to present through 1-3 page learning narrative summaries.
- 4) ***Create learning narratives with visually appealing infographics*** to illustrate the prioritized topics, in preparation for dissemination to appropriate audiences.
- 5) ***Evaluate the reception of these learning narratives*** among Nutrition International staff and select stakeholders.

Scope of Work

The consultant is expected to undertake the following activities and produce the listed deliverables. NB:

- Nutrition International is committed to gender equality; the selected consultant is required to indicate how to ensure that **gender equality is considered** in the provision of this contract and its deliverables.
- This work will be managed by dedicated staff at Nutrition International to work with the contracting agency to ensure the work is fit-to-purpose and relevant to our needs. We will work with the agency to develop a mutually reasonable timeline to allow for feedback at given milestones.
- Applicants are requested to present specific deliverable-based activities aligned with proposed level of effort required, in terms of number of days, as part of their **technical proposal**.

Under SO 1: *define what the 'learning' function in MEAL means at Nutrition International and capacity required*

Activities

- 1.1 Meet with Nutrition International staff to finalize the methods and decision-points in fulfilling this contract.
- 1.2 Conduct a scoping exercise with 15-20 global Nutrition International staff (contacts to be provided by Nutrition International) to better understand how “learning” is defined, what “learning” is currently occurring at Nutrition International, where there are opportunities for systematized narratives and opportunities for improvement.
- 1.3 Conduct a critical appraisal of “learning” functions and capacities at Nutrition International using the methods agreed upon with Nutrition International.

Deliverables

- 1.1 An inception plan, setting out how the scoping exercise will be accomplished, what methods will be used, what documents are required, who will be consulted, and a proposed outline for the summary report and critical appraisal; for approval from Nutrition International.
- 1.2 A summary report with the key findings from the scoping exercise, not more than 10 pages, plus any appropriate details in an Annex that can go beyond the page limit.

Under SO 2: *identify and prioritize 6-8 topics for learning narratives*

Activity

- 2.1 Conduct prioritization exercise with Nutrition International’s Program Officers and other stakeholders, as appropriate and agreed with Nutrition International, to prioritize the topics for 6-8 learning narratives.

Deliverable

- 2.1 List of proposed learning narrative topics, with the top 6-8 priority areas highlighted and proposed methods and data sources for moving forward on delivering these narratives

Under SO 3: *identify the most appropriate data and audiences for 6-8 prioritized narratives*

Activities

- 3.1 Review data available to Nutrition International’s Program Officers in each country, as appropriate.
- 3.2 Identify current concerns and benefits of each data source and summarize by key indicators.
- 3.3 Identify key stakeholders/ target audience for prioritized learning narratives.

Deliverable

- 3.1 Summarize results by each of the 6-8 prioritized learning narratives: data source/s, audience/s, proposed method of analysis and presentation

Under SO 4: *Create 6-8 learning narratives with visually appealing infographics*

Activities

- 4.1 For each prioritized learning topic: analyze selected data, develop infographics and propose summary text in the form of a narrative; share with Nutrition International for feedback and finalization.
- 4.2 Update learning narratives based on feedback and share with Nutrition International for distribution to target audience/s.

Deliverable

- 4.1 Six to eight learning narratives with infographics on prioritized topics

Under SO 5: *Evaluate the reception of these learning narratives*

Activities

- 5.1 Conduct interviews with at least the primary PO and one stakeholder recipient of each learning narrative to evaluate whether the learning narrative was adequate, timely, and used for program course-correction. Gather feedback to improve the usefulness of these learning narratives.
- 5.2 Inquire into whether and how learning narratives can become systematized at Nutrition International, formats that are most useful, and any other topics of interest (follow up from SO 1). Nutrition International will provide contact information for these interviews.
- 5.3 Summarize findings in a report to Nutrition International.

Deliverable

- 5.1 Report summarizing findings and recommendations for the next phase of learning narrative development and systematization at Nutrition International.

Additional information

Duty Station/Location

The consultant/s is expected to work from 'home.' All Nutrition International staff are accessible through the internet, no travel is approved for this consultancy. All interactions proposed by the consultant/s must be virtual.

Timeline

This consultancy will start as soon as contracted, preferably by July 2021. All deliverables for SO 1-3 will be completed by 30 November, SO 4 by 15 January 2022, and SO 5 by 31 March 2022.

Management and Reporting/Coordination mechanism

The consultant will directly report to the project leads, Sara Wuehler and Colin Beckworth.

Profile/qualifications of consultant

The project is suited to a single or multiple consultant/s who *demonstrate expertise* as follows:

Lead consultant

- Post-graduate in the following fields: monitoring and evaluation, economics, or public health and applied sciences, plus 10 years' experience, including consultancy, in the M&E sector with not-for-profit organisations and development partners in nutrition, health, or related fields.
- Excellent knowledge of MEAL frameworks, systems and infrastructure, with focus on *learning*.
- Experience in both qualitative and quantitative M&E methods.
- Experience of providing strategy advice to not-for-profit organisations.
- Excellent communication, facilitation, analytical and writing skills.
- Demonstrated ability to deliver quality results within strict deadlines.

Other consultants, if appropriate, will complement the primary consultant, fewer years required.

Nutrition International is committed to the fundamental principles of equal employment opportunity. All are encouraged to apply, including all who are considered less represented, such as women and minorities.

Application Process

Interested firms or consultants are invited to submit the following by email to proposals@nutritionintl.org by **18 July 2021** with the Subject line "Program learning in MEAL":

- Up-to-date curriculum vitae (CVs) for all consultants
- Technical proposal: not exceeding ten pages, describing the consultant's understanding of the task, proposed methodology, responsibilities of team members and key stakeholders and provisional work plan that breaks down activities and deliverables with associated timelines.
- Financial proposal in Excel: including daily fee rate for each team member, and any other expenses required to fulfill the terms of the consultancy.

Submissions without Technical and Financial proposals will not be reviewed.